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**Part One**: **Chapter 12**

What is the main purpose of evaluation questions?

* To help give focus to the evaluation
* Specify standards and criteria for judging
* They guide choices for data collection
* Involve the stakeholders

What are criteria and standards?

* The factors that will be used to judge the success of the program and may work with others to specify the standards the program must achieve on these criteria to be considered successful.
* Standards can be useful either in helping generate questions or specifying criteria; can signal areas that may be overlooked in the focus on the existing program;

What is the difference between the divergent and convergent phase? (Cronbach 1982)

* Divergent phase – develop at comprehensive list of potential questions and concern; considers stakeholders
* Convergent phase – evaluators select critical questions to be addressed; criteria developed for the questions for many stakeholders; questions that are retained should have high, direct potential use to important and/or many stakeholders. Questions may be further culled based on the cost and feasibility of providing valid answers.

What is the importance of evaluation models?

* Can help the evaluator consider areas of focus for the evaluation and educate the stakeholder as to the myriad issues that that evaluation can investigate.

How can using research help evaluation?

* Evaluator should make use of existing research to help develop causative models and questions to guide the evaluation.
* Can be used to identify causes of the problem the program is designed to address; to discover successes and failure; examine conditions.
* Can also compare models in other research.

**Chapter 13**

What to consider when planning evaluations?

* Select a design plan that is appropriate for data collection (descriptive or primarily casual)
* Each evaluation question requires the collection of information on at least variable.
* Check to see whether information relevant already exists (consider all possible data sources)
* Identify appropriate methods of collecting data.
* Determine how the data will be collected, organized, analyzed, and interpreted.
* Determine how to report evaluation findings.

What role can the client or stakeholder play?

* The evaluator and the stakeholder should examine each question carefully to identify any important research design issues relevant to the question.
* The evaluator and the stakeholder can consider who or what might be the source(s) of information for each of the questions.

What is a management plan?

* A management plan should be developed specifying the task to be completed, the timeline, personnel, and the cost associated with each task.
* It serves as a guide for overseeing the evaluation but should be adapted for changing circumstances.

What should be included or considered in an evaluation budget?

* Evaluators staff salary and benefits; consultants; travel costs; communication costs; printing and duplication; data processing; printed materials; supplies and equipment; subcontracts; overhead costs.

Why are contracts and agreements necessary?

* The evaluator should work out a contractual agreement with the client that indicates clearly the purpose of the evaluation, the activities to be completed, and the responsibilities for each in order to prevent potential problems or discrepancies that should arise.

**Chapter 14**

What are the essential steps for collecting information?

* Study the evaluation questions; develop or select and design; consider sampling strategies; identify appropriate sources or methods for collecting data; develop procedures for collecting data; collect the information; analyze the information; interpret the results and draw evaluative conclusions.

Why do evaluators use mixed methods?

* No one method or approach is always appropriate; the method must be selected based on the evaluation question, the context of the evaluation, and the values and perspectives of the various stakeholders.

What designs can an evaluator choose from?

* Experimental , Quasi-experimental , Descriptive Design

What does sampling mean?

* Refers to the method the evaluator will use to select the units to study.
* Different types of sampling are: purposive sampling, random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling

What is cost-analysis?

* Cost-analysis helps determine if the program outcomes are worth the cost.
* The methods for cost-analysis are: cost-benefit analysis, and cost effectiveness analysis, cost-utility analysis, and cost-feasibility analysis.

**Part Two:**

Yet again, I find myself overwhelmed with the vast amount of information presented in each chapter. I cannot believe that there is so much to consider when planning and executing program evaluation. I can now see how program evaluation could be a full-time profession! However, I recently had a discussion with my sister, who worked for the City of Regina, in the area of Aboriginal programming. She made it clear that program evaluation was only one of her many roles/responsibilities as a program manager. I also found it interesting that she considered the role of program evaluation to be the easiest to manage. Perhaps that is because she has been involved in many evaluations over the years and has developed an overall understanding of the process and has been able to design a “system” which works. Nevertheless, during our conversation, I sat there is disbelief and wondered how that could be considering the complexity of the process!

Despite my disbelief, chapter twelve highlighted the importance of identifying and defining the questions that need to be answered by the evaluation. Not only does it require “careful reflection and investigation”, but it also requires that the evaluator “gather and interpret information that can help key individuals and groups improve efforts, make enlightened decisions, and provide credible information to the public” (p.232-233). Thus, I can see how the divergent phase and the convergent phase are necessary in order to assist in narrowing the focus or direct of the evaluation. Without each phase, my assumption would be that an evaluator would become overwhelmed quickly. As an educator, I often feel overwhelmed when faced with a new curriculum or program that has been implemented by the division. I, too, need time to reflect and investigate the objectives and activities prior to teaching the concepts. Quite often we were also expected to meet with our colleagues in our professional learning communities (PLC) to review the material and discuss potential learning outcomes. That process alone helped me narrow my focus and understanding of the new material. Perhaps that process is comparable to involving the stakeholders at the beginning of the evaluation rather than just during the data collecting stage.

Chapter thirteen’s focus on the evaluation plan itself reminded me of the process that teachers go through when planning a unit or lesson plan. Although both plans aren’t necessarily “formal programs” they still require careful attention and consideration when choosing the objectives and deciding on the learning activities. Thus, just like evaluators, teachers select a design a plan, collect information, check to see whether information relevant already exists, identify appropriate methods of collecting data, determine how the data will be collected, organized, analyzed, and interpreted and determine how to report evaluation findings. Teachers are also managers of their classrooms, therefore, the management plan was of particular interest to me because of it oversees that the many facets of the evaluation. It is evident that a management plan is a necessity for effectiveness and required to “control resources, including time, money, and people” (p.277). I couldn’t imagine conducting an evaluation without considering all of the “managerial” aspects, especially when resources and time may be limited. In addition, I thoroughly agree that evaluation agreements and contracts are important because they clearly indicate the purpose of the evaluation, the activities to be completed, and the responsibilities. They can also prevent or alleviate potential problems or discrepancies that should arise during the evaluation.

I found chapter fourteen quite difficult to follow at times due to the scientific jargon used to explain each design. Although I understand that “no one method or approach is always appropriate” (p.305), I am still trying to “wrap my head around” the experimental, quasi-experimental, and descriptive design and when it is preferable to use each one. I may have to re-read the chapter in order for it to become clear. The concept that I found to be the most interesting in this chapter was the cost-analysis section. I believe it to be one of the most important considerations for most programs. I have a sense that a program’s merit is often directly linked to its cost. Therefore, if the evaluator can determine that the program outcomes are worth the cost, then the likelihood of the program to continue is high. But, what about those programs that have a high cost associated with it, but haven’t been meeting the “outcomes”? For example, I taught at an inner-city high school that had an after school program which taught the students to cook an easy 30-minute meal for his/her family. The students who were in attendance and cooked a meal were encouraged to take it home to their families for supper. The first year, attendance was high (on average 15 or more students) and therefore, the cost of the food for the program was high too. Due to the popularity of the program, at the beginning of the second year, the administrator insisted that a maximum of 10 students could participate which would keep the cost of the food down. However due to the imposed participation cap and sporadic attendance, quite often less than 10 students showed up for the program and food was wasted. As a result, although there were always students showing up to cook, the cost factor influenced the discontinuation of the program the following year. It is my opinion that had an adequate cost-analysis been conducted the program would still be thriving today!

Just a note...

Currently I am feeling disconnected to the content in the text due to the fact that I am not actively working and engaged in the field of education. Much of what I read is informative, however not necessarily relevant to my world right now. Any suggestions of how to approach my responses for the remainder of the course is welcomed.